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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to motivate first-grade students in a rural community in the southeastern United States to read independently for pleasure in the classroom and at home. A whole language program was implemented which did not include the use of basal readers or workbooks. Children's literature was the primary source used for reading instruction. Whole language activities and reading materials were provided for the students. The 23 first-grade students had the opportunity to read books from the classroom library and check out books from the school library. They were encouraged to take their library books home and share them with their families. All parents were asked to participate by reading to their children at home and encourage their children to read to them. Analysis of the data revealed that students read at least one book per week during their free time from the classroom library. Students also checked out at least one book from the school library per month. The students who took one library book home per month shared their books with their parents. (Contains 21 references and 6 tables of data. Appendixes present a reading list form and a parent verification form.) (Author/RS)

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ED 384 857

Motivating First-grade Students to Read Independently for Pleasure Through a Whole Language Program

by

Johnette C. Gunter

Cluster 61

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Johnette C. Gunter under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

3-16-95

Date of Final Approval of Report

June S. Delano

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENT		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
LIST OF TABLES		v
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	2
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	4
	Problem Description	4
	Problem Documentation	5
	Causative Analysis	6
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	7
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	13
	Goals and Expectations	13
	Expected Outcomes	13
	Measurement of Outcomes	13
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	16
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	16
	Description of Selected Solution	23
	Report of Action Taken	25
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	31
	Results	31
	Discussion	38
	Recommendations	41
	Dissemination	43
REFERENCES		44

Appendices Page

A READING LIST FORM..... 46

B PARENT VERIFICATION FORM..... 48

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Students Reading One Book Per Week..... 32

2 Sample of Books Read Most..... 33

3 Students Checking Out Library Books..... 34

4 Students Who Took Library Books Home..... 35

5 Books Taken Home and Read..... 36

6 Books Checked Out and Taken Home By Students.... 37

ABSTRACT

Motivating First-grade Students to Read Independently for Pleasure Through a Whole Language Program. Gunter, Johnette C., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern Univeristy, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies.
Reading for Pleasure/Whole Language/ Reading Motivation/ Reading for Enjoyment/Independent Reading/Reading Programs

This practicum was designed to motivate first-grade students to read independently for pleasure in the classroom and at home. A whole language program was implemented which did not include the use of basal readers or workbooks. Children's literature was the primary source used for reading instruction. Whole language activities and reading materials were provided for the students.

The 23 first-grade students had the opportunity to read books from the classroom library and check out books from the school library. They were encouraged to take their library books home and share them with their families. All parents were asked to participate by reading to their children at home and encouraging their children to read to them.

Analysis of the data revealed that students read at least one book per week during their free time from the classroom library. Students also checked out at least one book from the school library per month. The students who took one library book home per month shared their books with their parents.

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March 6, 1995 Johnette C. Gunter

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community was located in a southeastern state. It was primarily a rural community, with a population of approximately 1,000 within the town limits and immediate surrounding area. The community had historically depended upon agriculture to support approximately 50 local businesses (Gunter, 1991). In recent years the residents had turned to employment in several local garment construction plants. The residents who were not employed by the garment plants drove 30 miles or more to larger cities for better paying jobs. There was also a nuclear plant site that offered some employment. It was located approximately 35 miles from the community.

The two local manufacturing companies were essentially sewing room operations. Many parents of the students who attended the writer's elementary school were employed by the two local manufacturing companies. These were mostly lower paying, lower status jobs with minimal educational requirements. The nearby nuclear plant offered many families of the community higher paying, higher status employment, and was much more demanding in the educational requirements for its workers.

There were three schools located in the community. The

three schools were: (a) a high school housing ninth-grade throught twelfth-grade, (b) a middle school housing fifth-grade through eighth-grade, and (c) an elementary school housing four-year-old kindergarten through fourth-grade.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's work setting was an elementary school located in a small, rural community in the southeastern United States. The school served the student population of the community in which it was located and that of the surrounding areas. There were 578 students enrolled in this school. The school had a 54% minority population in which all the minority students were Black with the exception of three Hispanic students. Sixty-two percent of the students were on free lunch.

There were 34 certified teachers and 27 noncertified staff members employed by the elementary school. At the administrative level the school had a principal and an assistant principal. The school employed one full-time guidance counselor. Along with the kindergarten through fourth-grade teachers, there were special area teachers employed by the school. The special areas included the following: (a) music teacher, (b) art teacher, (c) physical education teacher, (d) resource teacher, (e) reading recovery/Chapter I teacher for second-grade, (f) Chapter I

teacher for third and fourth-grade, (g) extension teacher for third and second-grade, (h) special education teacher, and (i) media specialist. The noncertified staff members included the following: (a) six kindergarten aides, (b) five first-grade chapter I tutors/aides, (c) one chapter I tutor for third and fourth-grade, (d) one media specialist aide, (e) one aide for the special education class, (f) one attendance clerk, (g) one secretary, (h) three custodians, and (i) eight food service employees.

The writer's role was that of a first-grade teacher. The writer's eleven years of teaching experience had been in first-grade in the public schools. The teaching responsibilities of the writer included, but were not limited to, teaching reading, mathematics, handwriting, science, social studies, and health. The writer coordinated learning activities with the Chapter I tutor/aide who worked in the writer's first-grade classroom. There were various school committees upon which the writer served. The writer also worked with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) executive committee as the faculty representative.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem that existed was that a large number of the first-grade students in the writer's class did not enjoy reading independently for pleasure. Many of the first-grade students in the class only read from their reading books when stories were assigned for homework. They did not see their reading books as a source of reading enjoyment, but only as a source for completing homework and classwork assignments.

A large number of students did not read from printed materials that were available in the classroom during their free time. Available for the students' use were children's storybooks, various magazines, information books related to health and science, old reading books, poetry books, and rhyming storybooks. The reading level of the books were from kindergarten to fourth-grade. The students who finished their seatwork early enough to have free time would play with manipulatives or draw rather than read a book.

A small number of students checked out books from the library and read these. The students who checked out library books did not read their books during their free time in the classroom. Many of the students who checked out books did not take their books home and share them with their parents.

The writer tried to encourage the students to read during their free time by making available a variety of interesting reading materials in the classroom library. The writer also requested that the students choose books to practice reading during their free time. Later during the day they would be allowed to read books they had practiced to the class. The reason this failed was because many of the students just saw this as more work being requested by the teacher, and the later time during the day never came. The problem was that first-grade students did not read independently for pleasure.

Problem Documentation

Student interviews, teacher observations, and a telephone survey of parents were used by the writer to collect data that supported the existence of the problem. For two weeks the writer observed 8 of 22 students reading from their reading books, or from other books, in the classroom during their free time. The writer also observed that 12 of 22 students checked out library books during a one week period and, through student interviews, found that 5 of the 12 students read their library books. The writer contacted 15 of 22 parents by telephone and found that 6 of 15 parents said that their child brought home a library book and read the book.

Causative Analysis

There were several possible causes of the problem. The possible causes were: (a) Students were not interested in reading for pleasure, (b) students did not value reading, (c) students were having to spend too much time completing worksheets and workbook pages on isolated skills, and (d) students did not read for pleasure at home. Turner (1992) found that many students are becoming aliterate. Aliterate students are students who have the ability to read, but the unwillingness to do so. Their unwillingness to do so is related to their lack of interest. Students' interests are important influences on attitudes toward reading. Students who have an interest in books and reading spend their free time writing, looking at books, and read more successfully. Students who are interested in books and reading also value reading. Turner also found that students may not value reading independently for pleasure because they have been told, but not shown its importance.

Students do not read independently for pleasure because they have to spend too much time working on skill sheets in the classroom. Martinez, Vernon, Allen, and Teale (1991) reported that a student may complete up to 1,000 reading worksheets during a school year. Students spend approximately 1 hour per day on reading practice, but most of that time is spent completing worksheets and workbook

pages.

Turner (1992) found that a nonreading environment in schools and homes does not motivate students to read independently for pleasure. Sanacore (1992) found that many students are not likely to read for pleasure at home. Demographic trends indicate that a large number of students live in homes with two working parents or with a single parent who must work. These students go home each afternoon with little or no adult supervision. Rather than reading for pleasure these students spend their time watching television, talking on the telephone, or participating in other activities which do not involve books.

The specific cause of the problem in the writer's classroom was that many of the students were spending the majority of their time completing worksheets and workbook pages on isolated skills. These students were having to spend their free time finishing up seatwork. Time ran out for these students, and as a result, they did not become involved in independent reading for pleasure.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Travers (1993) reported that too many students are becoming nonreaders because schools are boring them with dull, silly basal readers, periodicals, and books. These students spend too much time on skills and drills because of curriculum and testing requirements. Morrow (1985) found

that many teachers do not place as much educational value on independent reading as they do on isolated skills instruction. Most teachers believe that the best way to develop reading proficiency is by having students complete worksheets. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) reported that most students spend reading time completing workbook pages and worksheets. Martinez et al. (1991) found that worksheets do not improve reading achievement gains. Independent reading is, however, associated with gains in reading achievement.

Funk and Funk (1992) reported that 94% of the American people are literate, but only 55% read from a book in a given year. Childhood is the time that readers are made. Many children have not been exposed to books or had the opportunity to develop an interest in reading prior to entering school. It is important that children discover the joy of reading at an early age. One of the main goals of elementary schools should be the development of children who can and will read.

Turner (1992) stated that the main goals of reading instruction should be reading for information and pleasure. There are too many students who are not developing lifelong reading habits and who are spending less time reading for pleasure. Related to the problem of students spending less time reading for pleasure is aliteracy. Decker (1988)

reported that aliteracy is a growing problem for teachers and students. Greany (1980) found that children are learning how to read without learning to love reading.

If children are not learning to read independently for pleasure at home before they enter school, then this lifelong reading habit will have to be developed in school. Sanacore (1992) stated that it should not be considered a waste of time for schools to encourage children to read independently for pleasure. It should not be considered a waste of time or a frill for schools to offer children the opportunity to develop the lifetime reading habit. Lifetime literacy begins with independent reading for pleasure. Independent reading also helps students to refine their reading skills and strategies by applying them to meaningful text. Through independent reading students build their prior knowledge of different topics. Independent reading also helps students to improve their reading achievement.

Martinez et al. (1991) stated that it is important for children to practice reading in order to become proficient readers. Children should spend the majority of their seatwork time reading. But they should not be reading workbook pages and worksheets. They should be reading real books. These authors also found that independent reading is associated with gains in reading achievement. If children could be encouraged to spend just 10 minutes each day

reading independently, there would be an improvement in their reading proficiency. The time spent on workbook pages and worksheets has no relation to the gains that students make in reading proficiency.

Not only are students spending too much of their seatwork time on worksheets and workbook pages, but schools are spending too much money on students' seatwork. Martinez et al. (1991) reported that the average annual cost of seatwork per student was $53.38. For a school with 500 students the annual cost would be $26,690. This cost included workbooks, equipment and staff to duplicate worksheets, and paper supplies. Instead of spending school funds on seatwork, schools funds should be spent on purchasing books for students to read. If schools would cut seatwork costs in half by replacing worksheet tasks with independent reading, the savings would allow schools to purchase as many as 30 books per student each year.

Turner (1992) found that the lack of motivation to read is not limited to just poor readers. Good readers, as well as poor readers, are reluctant to engage in recreational and independent reading. These students are at risk of becoming nonreaders. Many students perceive reading as school or work related because of the way reading is taught and practiced in the classrooms. This makes it difficult for students to focus on the social uses or real life aspects of reading.

The two difficult tasks that face educators are: (a) understanding why students are not reading independently for pleasure, and (b) motivating students to become lifelong readers through independent reading. Turner also listed six factors related to why students are reluctant to read independently for pleasure. The six factors were: (a) lack of interest, (b) inappropriate instruction, (c) conflicting values on the importance of reading, (d) inappropriateness and scarcity of materials, (e) a nonreading environment in both the school and home, and (f) lack of reading ability and past failures in reading.

Sanacore (1992) reported that students are at risk of becoming illiterate or aliterate, failing, and of dropping out of school due to their reading habits. Many students are not likely to read for pleasure at home; therefore, schools must accept the challenge of encouraging students to read for pleasure. Davis (1994) reported that as we approach the 21st century, more and more of our students are reading less and less. Funk and Funk (1992) reported that the average elementary student spends approximately 70% of reading instructional time doing seatwork instead of reading.

The literature provided evidence that students do not read independently for pleasure. There are homes in which children are not learning to develop the love of reading. There are also classrooms in which teachers view reading

independently for pleasure as a waste of time. Students spend too much time completing workbook pages and skill sheets. They perceive reading as a task that must be done in order to complete classwork. Many teachers believe that if students spend their time doing workbook pages and skill sheets, they will learn how to read. It is not only important that students learn how to read, but that they want to read. Workbook pages and skill sheets do not motivate students to read for pleasure.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal and Expectations

The following goal and outcomes were projected for this practicum. The writer's goal is that the first-grade students in the class will read independently for pleasure.

Expected Outcomes

There were three expected outcomes projected for this practicum. The outcomes were:

1. Nineteen out of 23 first-grade students will read independently from printed materials provided by the teacher in the classroom.

2. Nineteen out of 23 first-grade students will check out library books.

3. Nineteen out of 23 first-grade students will take their library books home and share their books with their parents.

Measurement of Outcomes

For outcome 1, the evaluation tools that were used were teacher observations and a reading lists of books read by each student (see Appendix A). The writer used direct observations to observe students' reading behavior in the classroom. The observations provided the writer with information about individual students as well as the class as

a whole. The writer determined if students were reading independently, who was reading independently and who was not, and what the students were reading. The writer recorded notes daily about the observations. A reading list of books read by each student was maintained by the students in reading folders. Each time a student completed a book the student wrote the title of the book and the date the book was completed on his or her reading list. The reading folders kept the writer informed about how many books the students were reading each week.

The standard of achievement that was acceptable for demonstrating success was that each student had to read at least one book per week.

For outcome 2, the evaluation tool that was used was teacher observations. The writer used direct observations to observe which students checked out books from the school library, and if students were reading their library books in the classroom or taking their books home to be read. The writer recorded notes daily about the observations. When students checked out a library book, they were given a ziplock bag containing a parent verification form to carry their books home in.

The standard of achievement that was acceptable for demonstrating success was that each student had to check out at least one book from the school library per month.

Students were encouraged to take their library books home and share them with their parents.

For outcome 3, the evaluation tools that were used were teacher observations and a parent verification form (see Appendix B). The writer used direct observations to observe which students were taking their library books home and which students were not. The writer recorded notes daily about the observations. A parent verification form was also sent home to parents. The parents provided the following information on the form: (a) the title of the library book, (b) checked the appropriate statement which indicated if the library book was read to the parents by the child or if the parents read the library book to the child, (c) date the book was read, and (d) parent's signature. The parent verification form provided the writer with information about how many children were taking their library books home, and which children were reading their library books or having their books read to them.

The standard of achievement that was acceptable for demonstrating success was that each student had to take one library book home per month and share the book with his or her parents. The student could read the book to the parents or the parents could read the book to the student.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

The problem that existed in the writer's first-grade class was that a large number of the students did not enjoy reading independently for pleasure. They would not read from printed materials that were available in the classroom library during their free time. A small number of students checked out books from the school library. Many of the students who checked out library books did not read their books during free time. They also did not take their books home and share them with their parents.

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The review of the literature revealed several possible solutions which could be useful for solving the problem of first-grade students who do not read independently for pleasure. Some of the solutions were: (a) schoolwide reading motivation programs, (b) using children's literature in the classroom, (c) enlisting the help of parents and volunteers, (d) creating classroom libraries, (e) moving away from skills and drills, (f) reading aloud to students, and (g) implementing a whole language program in the classroom.

Turner (1992) stated that students have not been shown the value of independent reading. Teachers should serve as reading role models for students by demonstrating how

important reading is in their own lives. As reading role models teachers should discuss with students what they enjoy reading and provide the opportunity for students to see them reading. If teachers want to be reading role models, they need to do the following: (a) Select a regular time to read aloud to students, (b) share a favorite book or story with students, and (c) communicate to students how favorite selections have provided personal pleasure and knowledge. Sanacore (1992) also promoted the value of teachers serving as reading role models for students. He found that students will consider the importance of reading for pleasure if they see teachers demonstrating the joy of reading. Allen, Michalove, Shockley, and West (1991) stated that children develop a desire to read due to their observations of adults reading.

Turner (1992) stated that teachers should read a variety of materials daily to students. Teachers reading daily to students helps them to develop the enjoyment of reading. This solution strategy also provides teachers with the opportunity to model good reading behavior. Travers (1993) found that it is not just very young children who enjoy listening to stories. He reported that the Educational Research Center completed a study in 1985 which found that students in all elementary grades enjoy listening to stories.

Huck (1987) stated that, ideally, the process of

learning to read should begin at home with parents reading books to children. The best way that parents can prepare their children for school is to read aloud to them from the time they are able to sit up and enjoy looking at pictures in a book. Realistically, many children live in homes where books cannot be found. These children are deprived of hearing a bedtime story or touching a book. It is not until they enter school that these children are exposed to books.

Huck (1987) also stated that in order for children to practice their reading skills by choosing books they want to read, a daily time must be provided by the classroom teacher for this reading activity. Teachers usually give the children who are good readers time to read independently for pleasure, which allows them to become even better readers. The children who are poor readers are being drilled on isolated decoding skills, which denies them the opportunity to develop fluency or enjoyment of reading. In order for all children to have an opportunity to read widely, a certain time for recreational or free reading should be provided each day. Huck also found that many teachers provided a sustained silent reading time for children to do recreational reading in the classroom. During sustained silent reading everyone, including the teacher, reads a book of his or her own choosing. Johnson (1991) found that students are more motivated to read a book they have chosen, rather than a book

that has been chosen for them. The recreational reading period begins with approximately 8 or 10 minutes for reading. The time is gradually increased until the children can sustain their reading at least 30 to 45 minutes each day.

Million Minutes was a schoolwide reading motivation program which Cooper (1990) implemented at an elementary school where he was the principal. It was a program which emphasized the intrinsic rewards of reading for its own sake. Students at all grade levels kept track of the number of minutes they read independently each day at home and in school. They counted the minutes if they read to another person or if someone read to them. The students kept track of the minutes they read at home and the minutes they read in school on two separate sheets of paper. Parents had to sign the sheet with the number of minutes read at home. The students turned their sheets in to the school. Teachers, staff members, parents, and the community were involved in the reading program. Volunteers counted the number of minutes read by each student. Everyone was involved in helping the school achieve its goal of a million minutes of reading. There would be a schoolwide celebration when the goal was achieved. Martinez et al. (1991) also found that schoolwide reading programs could be implemented to motivate students to read indpendently for pleasure. The school could challenge the students to read a certain number of books by a

certain date, or sustained silent reading could be implemented as a schoolwide reading program.

Turner (1992) stated that classroom libraries provide the opportunity for students to read for information and enjoyment. Classroom libraries should include a variety of materials such as newspapers, magazines, maps, reference books, big books, picture books, storybooks, and books made by students. There should be reading materials below grade level and above grade level in the classroom library. Martinez et al. (1991) stated that a classroom library is an integral part of the reading instructional program. Students in classrooms containing libraries read 50% more books than students in classrooms without libraries.

Huck (1987) stated that using literature in the reading program provided the opportunity for children to experience joy in reading and in becoming lifetime readers. Using literature in the classroom allows children to become engrossed in an entire book. The goal of every school's reading program should be to produce students who not only know how to read but who do read. Funk and Funk (1992) found that children's literature not only enhances reading instruction, but it also contributes to language development, written composition, development of permanent reading habits, and personal development.

Another solution that was suggested in the review of the

literature was to move away from the traditional method of reading instruction, in which a basal reading series is used, to implementation of a whole language program in the classroom. Turner (1992) stated that the focus of reading instruction should be on the learner's achievement level, experiential background, maturational level, and it should promote the desire to continue learning. Using a basal reading series focuses on the subskills and mechanics of reading. Students are not motivated to read when teachers use a basal reading series to emphasize skills content and these skills are not linked in meaningful ways to literature and other subjects. Workbooks and skill sheets are used as part of the basal reading series to teach reading skills. The problem with workbooks and skill sheets is that they do not reflect how reading is used in daily life. Students should understand that reading is used in daily life to locate information and for pleasure.

Funk and Funk (1992) described basal reading programs as mechanized and phonics based with an emphasis on decoding skills. These programs, along with their skill building activities, alienate children from reading. Allen et al. (1991) found that rigid use of the basal curriculum contributed directly to school failure. Children were promoted or retained based on their progress in the basal. There are too many children who are not becoming truly

literate because of the method being used to teach reading skills in isolation. There is a growing body of research on the literacy development of children in classrooms where language learning is whole and meaningful. Martinez et al. (1991) stated that skill sheets do not provide children with the opportunity to use reading skills in an integrated fashion that is required for real reading tasks. Skill sheets do not foster reading fluency because there is very little reading of extended texts.

Watson (1989) described what teachers and students do in a whole language classroom. One thing that students and teachers do every day in a whole language classroom is read. Teachers read or tell stories to the students every day. The content and form of stories heard by the students provide a basis for reading and writing as well as provide a variety of experiences with literature and subject areas. The stories that students read are stories of their own choosing. Students practice reading and become more successful and joyful readers through reading quality stories and other real texts.

Webb, Bowers, Hietpas, Lang, and McKinley (1991) found that the teacher's goal in a whole language classroom is that each student will not only be a reader, but will love to read. To help achieve that goal reading, literature, and writing are all connected in a whole language classroom.

Students experience the joy of reading through listening to stories from children's literature. They learn to read by reading from literature. Students also learn how to read from their own writings. The students in a whole language classroom develop a genuine love and appreciation of literature and begin to see themselves as real writers.

Shanahan (1991) stated that children learn from active involvement. This is one basic premise about learning that is inherent in whole language. In order for children to understand their environment they must be able to manipulate it. Children who are learning how to read need to read actively in order to make progress in reading.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer used a whole language program in the classroom to motivate first-grade students to read independently for pleasure. Burk and Melton-Pages (1991) found that research on children's natural language learning processes supports the creation of whole language classrooms. The writer used the following whole language components that Watson (cited in Burk and Melton-Pages, 1991) identified as being present in whole language classrooms daily: (a) Students are read to or told stories every day, (b) students have time to read and write independently every day, (c) the world of the student is brought into the classroom every day, and (d) reading and writing are brought to conscious

awareness every day. The students were involved in real reading and writing in the classroom. The writer provided students with opportunities to use language, read literature, use integrated language processes across the curriculum, and to grow as language users through risk-taking.

Children's literature was used by the writer as the primary source for reading instruction. Funk and Funk (1992) stated that research and professional literature provide evidence that the use of children's literature is instrumental in developing permanent reading habits. They stated that it has been found in study after study that children's literature and whole language programs have a positive effect upon students' reading achievement. Grindler and Stratton (1992) found that research and learning theory provide evidence that the whole language curricula are superior to isolated skills and drill instruction.

In order to motivate first-grade students to read independently for pleasure, the writer provided a time each day for sustained silent reading (Huck, 1987). The students were allowed to choose books to read during this time from the classroom library. The writer also read to the students every day as suggested by Watson (cited in Burk and Melton-Pages, 1991). There was a scheduled time each day for the students to write in their journals (Johnson and Stone, 1991). Time was also provided for the students to read to

each other and to the class.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation phase began with a meeting between the writer and the principal in which the project was discussed. The writer received approval by the principal to use the basal textbooks as a supplementary reading source and to eliminate the use of reading workbooks. The writer requested that the school purchase whole language storybooks from a whole language publishing company. The principal approved a limited order of whole language books.

The writer met with the parents of her first-grade students during the first week of implementation to explain the whole language program and why it was being implemented. Topics discussed during the meeting were the following: (a) reading folders, (b) parent verification form, (c) sustained silent reading, (d) journal writing, (e) monthly newsletter, and (f) reading for pleasure. The parents also had the opportunity to examine the whole language books that their children would be reading. The writer kept the parents informed through a monthly newsletter.

When the students arrived in the classroom, the writer introduced them to reading in a nonthreatening and meaningful way. They were introduced to the morning message which is a message written to the class by the teacher. The morning message is read aloud by the teacher and the class together.

The writer used the morning message with the students at the beginning of each day.

The whole language books that were purchased by the school were used with the students for reading. These books provided the students with real, whole stories to read in a format that made it easy for the students to be successful from the first day they began reading. As the students read the books, they were placed in the classroom library for the students to enjoy over and over again.

The students were also introduced to the classroom library which was stocked with children's literature, big books, magazines, and poetry books. During the first week of implementation the writer read many books from the classroom library in order to entice and motivate the students to use it during their free time. Reading a variety of materials to the students was a daily activity.

Not only were the students encouraged to use the classroom library, but they were also encouraged to use the school library. The writer informed the students that their scheduled time to visit the school library was each Wednesday. They were encouraged to check out books and take them home to share with their families. The writer explained to the students the parent verification form which they would take home with their library books each Wednesday for their parents to complete. The parent verification form had to be

returned by the following Wednesday along with each students' library book.

The students also visited the local public library and were encouraged to use it as often as possible. During their visit the students were read several books by the librarian and were given the opportunity to examine the books in the library. Each student received a form for their parents to fill out which would entitle them to their very own library card. Fifteen students returned the form and received a library card in their own name.

Another daily activity which began during the first week of implementation was journal writing. Journal writing began as a 5 minute activity which was extended to 15 minutes each day. The students who wanted to share their journals were allowed to do so. Due to scheduling conflicts, the writer had to change journal writing time on several occasions.

The students were also introduced to their reading folders during the first week of implementation. Each student's folder contained his or her name and a form which was used to record the books he or she read independently for pleasure. The writer carefully explained the form and demonstrated how the students would use it. The students were provided with additional forms as needed.

Another daily activity which began during the first week of implementation was sustained silent reading which was

called ZYLAR in the writer's classroom. ZYLAR stands for Zip Your Lip and Read. The students were allowed to select their reading materials for ZYLAR. ZYLAR began with 5 minutes of sustained reading and was extended to 20 minutes each day as the students could sustain longer periods of reading. The time for sustained silent reading also had to be changed on several occasions due to scheduling conflicts.

Time was also provided for the students to read to the class. This was probably the most popular activity in the classroom. The students would select books from the classroom library to read or bring their favorites from home. Some of the students would choose to read their library books to the class.

During the implementation phase a storyteller visited the classroom and told a familiar tale to the class. The storyteller used props and provided for student participation. The principal and the assistant principal visited the classroom to read to the students. The principal also returned to listen to the students read books that they had written and illustrated.

The writer demonstrated to the students how to make their own books which they could write and illustrate. Materials such as a variety of paper, a stapler, crayons, markers, pens, pencils, glue, and magazines were provided for the students' use. The students were also provided time to

share their books with the class. Another activity that the writer provided for the students was tape-recording themselves as they read a story. All of the students enjoyed listening to the recorded stories.

The writer had planned to conference with each student about books read. A teacher conference log was going to be used for each individual student. As the writer proceeded with this process, it became evident that there would not be sufficient time to conference with each student. The writer made the decision to abandon this plan.

There was an unexpected event that took place which the writer could not have anticipated during the proposal phase of the practicum. Another first-grade classroom was established due to the increase in the number of first-grade students entering the writer's school. Each first-grade teacher would transfer students to the newly established classroom. The principal decided how many students each teacher would transfer. During the second week of implementation the writer transferred four students and during the third week of implementation the writer transferred one more student. The transfer of the five students reduced the number of first-grade students in the writer's classroom from 27 to 22. During the fourth week of implementation the writer received a new student. The enrollment of the new student increased the number of

students in the writer's classroom from 22 to 23. The writer adjusted the three expected outcomes due to the decrease in the number of students in the classroom.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem that existed in the writer's first-grade classroom was that a large number of students did not enjoy reading independently for pleasure. The students would not read from a variety printed materials that were available in the classroom library. Many of the students would not check out library books from the school library to read. The students who did check out library books would not read them during their free time in the classroom. They also would not take their library books home to share with their families.

To motivate the students to read independently for pleasure the writer implemented a whole language program in the classroom. The whole language program included the following components: (a) The students were read to every day, (b) the students had time to read and write independently every day, (c) children's literature was the primary source for reading instruction, and (d) reading and writing were brought to conscious awareness every day in the classroom.

Results

The first expected outcome of this practicum was that 19 out of 23 first-grade students would read independently from printed materials provided by the teacher in the classroom.

The standard of achievement that would be acceptable for demonstrating success would be that each student would read at least one book per week. Table 1 displays the number of first-grade students who read at least one book per week.

Table 1

Students Reading One Book Per Week

N=23

Week	No. of students
1	11
2	19
3	21
4	17
5	20
6	20
7	23
8	18
9	22
10	17
11	19
12	21
Mean	19.0

Table 2 displays a sample of books that the students read most from the classroom library. The students read the

books independently during their free time.

Table 2

Sample of Books Read Most

Title	Author
My Family	Jillian Cutting
I Go, Go, Go	Jillian Cutting
The Birthday Cake	Joy Cowley
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Bill Martin, Jr.
I Can Jump	Joy Cowley
The Race	Joy Cowley
Our Granny	Joy Cowley
My Shadow	Jillian Cutting
Our Grandad	Jillian Cutting
Cat's Party	Joy Cowley
Books	Jillian Cutting
Goodbye, Lucy	Joy Cowley
The Seed	Joy Cowley
Along Comes Jake	Joy Cowley
I Am...	Jillian Cutting
The Farm	Jillian Cutting

The second expected outcome was that 19 out of 23 first-grade students would check out library books from the school library. The students were taken to the library on Wednesday of each week. During the weekly library visits, the students were given the opportunity to check out books. The standard of achievement that would be acceptable for demonstrating success would be that each first-grade student would check out at least one library book per month. Table 3 displays the number of first-grade students who checked out library books during each month of the practicum implementation.

Table 3

Students Checking Out Library Books

N=23

Month	No. of students
1	22
2	23
3	22
Mean	22.3

The third expected outcome proposed that 19 out of 23 first-grade students would take their library books home and share them with their parents. The standard of achievement that would be acceptable for demonstrating success would be

that each first-grade student would take one library book home per month and share the book with his or her parents. Table 4 displays the number of first-grade students who took their library books home during the 3 months of the practicum implementation.

Table 4

Students Who Took Library Books Home

N=23

Month	No. of Students
1	22
2	23
3	22
Mean	22.3

Table 5 displays the number of first-grade students who took their library books home and shared them with their parents during each month of the practicum implementation. The students could read their library books to their parents, or the parents could read the books to the students.

Table 6 displays the number of library books each first-grade student checked out from the school library during each month of the practicum implementation. Also displayed in Table 6 are the number of library books each first-grade student took home and read with his or her

parents. There were several first-grade students who checked out library books from the school library and took them home, but the library books were not read. If a parent verification form was returned to school by a first-grade student not filled out, the writer considered the library book not read. One first-grade student returned the parent verification form with a note written on it by her parent. The parent had written that she did not have time to read the library book to her child. Most parents completed the parent verification forms each week that they were sent home by the first-grade students. They returned the library books and the parent verification forms on or before the following Wednesday when their child would again visit the school library.

Table 5

Books Taken Home and Read

N=23

Month	No. of Students
1	22
2	23
3	21
Mean	22.0

Table 6

Books Checked Out and Taken Home By Students

N=23

Student	Books checked out			Books taken home and read		
	Mo. 1	Mo. 2	Mo. 3	Mo. 1	Mo. 2	Mo. 3
1	2	5	3	2	5	3
2	3	2	4	3	2	4
3	2	4	5	2	4	5
4	2	4	5	2	4	5
5	2	3	2	2	3	2
6	3	4	4	3	4	4
7	3	3	3	3	3	3
8	1	1	2	1	1	2
9	2	2	3	2	2	3
10	2	1	1	1	1	0
11	2	3	5	2	3	5
12	3	3	4	3	3	4
13	2	4	4	2	4	4
14	2	4	4	2	4	4
15	3	4	4	3	4	4
16	3	4	5	3	4	5
17	2	2	0	2	2	0
18	2	4	6	2	4	6
19	2	4	4	2	4	4

(table continues)

Student	Books checked out			Books taken home and read		
	Mo. 1	Mo. 2	Mo. 3	Mo. 1	Mo. 2	Mo. 3
20	2	3	1	2	3	1
21	2	4	4	1	3	3
22	0	2	5	0	2	5
23	2	5	5	2	5	5
Mean	2.1	3.2	3.6	2.0	3.2	3.5

Discussion

The goal for this practicum was to motivate first-grade students to read independently for pleasure. When analyzing the mean results in Table 1, the standard of achievement for the first outcome was successfully met. The average number of students reading at least one book per week over the 12 weeks of implementation were 19. However, when reviewing the results for each week there were 4 weeks where the criteria for the first outcome were not met. During the first week of implementation the outcome was not successfully met. One possible explanation is that many of the students were still adjusting to first-grade and were feeling unsure about what was expected of them. They were expecting to be placed in a reading group, given a basal and a workbook to learn how to read. When this did not happen and they were given the opportunity to choose from a variety of printed

materials to read, some of the students were unsure of what to do. Another possible explanation is that some of the students did not have the self-confidence to pick up a book and read it. There were students who commented that they could not read even when they knew some vocabulary words. The whole language books in the classroom helped to improve the students' self-confidence.

Funk and Funk (1992) found that many children have not been exposed to books or had the opportunity to develop an interest in reading. During the first week of implementation many of the students' interest in reading was being developed. Some of the students needed a little more time to discover the joy of reading.

The standard of achievement for the first outcome was not met during weeks 4, 8, and 10. There is no important difference between the number of students who read at least one book per week during weeks 4, 8, and 10 and the standard of achievement for the first outcome.

The results indicate that the standard of achievement for the second outcome was successfully met (see Table 3). All of the students enjoyed their weekly visit to the library and looked forward to checking out books. One possible explanation for the success of this outcome is the use of the whole language reading books that the writer used in the classroom. The students experienced immediate success and

were eager to read a variety of books. Another possible explanation for the success of this outcome is that the writer read to the students daily and provided time for the students to read to one another and to the class. Many of the students enjoyed sharing their library books with the class, or would ask the writer to read their library books to the class. Turner (1992) stated that teachers should read a variety of materials daily to students. Teachers who read daily to students help them to develop the enjoyment of reading.

For the third outcome the standard of achievement was also successfully met (see Table 4). It became routine in the writer's classroom that as soon as the students returned from the library each student who checked out a book was given a ziplock bag containing a parent verification form. The students were eager to take their library books home and share them with their families. It was very rewarding for the writer when a student would return the parent verification form with a message from the parent stating that the book was very good and the writer should read it to the class. Many parents wrote comments on the forms which indicated to the writer that the parents were involved in reading with or to their child. One explanation for the success of parent involvement could be due to the meeting that the writer held with the parents during the first week

of implementation. Twenty parents out of 27 attended the orientation meeting. The parents had been notified that the writer would discuss the whole language program which would be implemented. This was a new program to the parents and they were curious to find out how their children would be taught reading. The writer received the approval and the support of the parents once they saw how successful their children were in reading.

Table 6 shows that the standard of achievement for outcome two and outcome three were exceeded by the second and third months of the practicum implementation. The first-grade students had checked out, taken home, and read more than one library book each month.

The writer was able to achieve the goal that the first-grade students in the class would read independently for pleasure through implementation of this practicum. Webb, Bowers, Hietpas, Lang, and McKinley (1991) found that the teacher's goal in a whole language classroom is that each student will not only be a reader, but will love to read.

Recommendations

1. Whole language storybooks excite students about reading. The students feel successful as readers the very first time they pick up a whole language book because they immerse the students in language patterns that are predictable and fun to read. It is fundamental to a whole language reading program

that the students have access to a large selection of whole language storybooks that progress through different reading levels. The students enjoyed the books that were available in the writer's classroom, but more would have been better.

2. It is very beneficial to keep the parents informed about the learning concepts that are being taught in the classroom and how they can reinforce these concepts at home. Communication with the parents will also maintain their support. A weekly newsletter would be more beneficial than a monthly newsletter. There are too many events that take place during the week that the parents need to be informed about.

3. Sustained silent reading and journal writing are two important components of a whole language reading program. They are also two activities that children enjoy and look forward to doing. When scheduling a time for sustained silent reading and journal writing, one should make sure the times are convenient. They need to be scheduled during an uninterrupted block of time that will be convenient every day. The changes that the writer made in the times just made it more difficult for the students to get into a routine. It is necessary to give lots of thought to when the best times are for these two important activities, and do not deviate from the times that have been selected. The students need to know that sustained silent reading and journal writing will

take place during the same time every day. If the students know when these activities are going to take place every day, they will be prepared and ready to start.

The writer will continue to use a whole language program in the classroom, because it does motivate students to read independently for pleasure.

Dissemination

The writer will share a copy of the practicum report with the principal. The writer has also discussed the practicum in a grade level meeting with the other six first-grade teachers. Three of the teachers met with the writer on different occasions to request more information. One of the first-grade teachers stayed in contact with the writer inquiring about the success of the practicum throughout implementation. This teacher recently met with the principal to request whole language reading books. Her request was approved. She made the decision not to use reading workbooks for the remainder of the school year. The workbook money will be used to purchase the whole language materials. She also informed the writer that she will reduce the number of skill sheets that she requires her students to complete. More free time will be provided for her students to read independently. The practicum had an influence on this first-grade teacher. The writer will share the practicum and the results upon request by colleagues.

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APPENDIX A

READING LIST FORM

READING LIST OF

BOOKS I HAVE READ

Title Date

APPENDIX B

PARENT VERIFICATION FORM

PARENT VERIFICATION FORM

Please check the appropriate box.

[ ] My child read his/her library book to me.

[ ] I read my child's library book to him/her.

Child's Name

Title of Book

Parent's Signature

Date

Please return the form to school.